

What you need to know before your appointment to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine

Date: January 4, 2021

The current priority is to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to long-term care home and retirement home staff, and essential caregivers of residents. To maximize appointment bookings, high risk hospital staff can also be vaccinated at this time. Residents of long-term care homes and retirement homes will soon be receiving the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

You need two doses of the vaccine that will be given at least 21 days apart, for the best protection. See instructions below on how to prepare for your vaccination.

What you need to do:

1. To ensure that appointment bookings are restricted to those above, we are working with each facility to book appointments for those in these priority groups. You will receive an email confirmation of your appointment time via the email address you provide your facility with. Be sure to check your junk mail if you don't receive in your inbox.
2. Screen yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms on the day of your appointment, stay home and cancel your appointment by clicking on the link in the confirmation email or notifying your administrator.
3. Bring your health card (OHIP). If you don't have one, bring another piece of government identification.
4. Bring your own mask, glasses or other assistive devices.
5. Wear a loose sleeve or short sleeve shirt for easy access to your upper arm.
6. Arrive at your appointment time only and not early. Due to COVID public health measures we have limited waiting room space available. Dress for the weather as you may be required to wait outdoors for a few minutes before entering the clinic.
7. Do not wear scented products (e.g. perfume) as some people are allergic.
8. You must stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after you have been vaccinated so you can be monitored for any side effects or allergic reactions. The entire process may take 30 minutes or longer.

Do not get this Pfizer vaccine if you:

- have allergies to any vaccine ingredients, including polyethylene glycol (PEG); or
- have had a severe reaction to this vaccine or
- have received another vaccine in the last 14 days.

Consult with your health care provider before booking an appointment if you:

- are pregnant, want to become pregnant soon after vaccination, or are breastfeeding;
- have a autoimmune disorder or;
- have a weakened immune system due to illness or treatment;
- have severe allergies to things other than a component of the vaccine, for which you have been prescribed an Epi-Pen.

People in these groups are not recommended to be vaccinated at this time as a precautionary measure until more information on the vaccine use in these groups is available. Your health care provider will review the benefits and risks for your unique situation. The vaccine can be provided to you at our clinic provided that you have consulted with your health care provider prior to coming for your appointment, and it has been recommended that you receive the vaccine.

We are currently not providing the vaccine to anyone under 16 years of age.

Frequently Asked Questions

If I don't have a health card, am I still eligible for the free vaccine?

Yes. If you don't have a health card, bring a government issued photo ID such as a driver's license, passport, Status Card, etc.

What are the vaccine ingredients that I may be allergic to?

- mRNA (medicinal ingredient)
- ALC-0315 = (4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate)
- ALC-0159 = 2-[(**polyethylene glycol**)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide
- 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine
- dibasic sodium phosphate dehydrate
- monobasic potassium phosphate

What is polyethylene glycol (PEG)? How do I know if I have a PEG allergy?

This compound is commonly used in laxatives, makeup, skin care products, personal lubricants and toothpastes. It is also in cough syrup, and in some food and drinks. If you are unsure of the ingredients you are allergic to, talk to a health care provider.

Can I still get the vaccine if I have existing health conditions (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, hepatitis, HIV)?

Yes. People with stable health conditions, including HIV, may be vaccinated with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as long they are not on medications that weaken the immune system. This also includes people with stable hepatitis B or C.

Can I still get the vaccine if I'm trying to get pregnant?

There is limited information on the use of this Pfizer vaccine in pregnant people. If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to have a baby, talk to your health care provider first. As a precaution, avoid trying to get pregnant for one to two months after finishing this two-dose vaccine.

If I have had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need the vaccine?

Yes. There is some evidence to suggest that natural immunity from a COVID-19 illness may not last very long. It is best to get the vaccine to stay protected.

Do I still need to wear and mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received this two-dose vaccine?

Yes. It is still important for everyone to continue with public health measures like wearing a mask, physical distancing and washing hands often until we can be sure that the vaccine prevents the spread of most COVID-19 infections.

Do I still need to complete surveillance testing for COVID-19 if required at my workplace after I have been vaccinated?

Yes. At this time, there is not enough evidence to know whether this vaccine prevents people who develop asymptomatic COVID-19 infection from passing it on to others so continued surveillance testing is recommended at this time.

Can I have COVID-19 vaccine if I just recently received my flu shot or another vaccine?

According to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) COVID-19 vaccine should not be given simultaneously with other vaccines at this time, unless the other vaccine is required for post-exposure prophylaxis (i.e. Rabies). Until more information is known about any interactions between mRNA vaccines and inactivated or live vaccines, people should wait at least 28 days after the administration of their complete series of COVID-19 vaccine before receiving any other vaccine. And for those who have received a vaccine recently, they should wait at least 14 days to receive COVID-19 vaccine.

My facility is currently in COVID-19 outbreak. Can I still receive the vaccine?

We are immunizing staff who are working in facilities that are in outbreak, provided they pass COVID-19 symptom screening and have not been identified as a high risk contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 by public health (i.e. have not directed to self-isolate or put on work self-isolation if deemed critical staff).

For more information about COVID-19 vaccine, please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.